

November-2004

# FOCUS

## A Newsletter for Family & Consumer Sciences Teachers

### ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY! ! !

This past weekend was the FCCLA Cluster Meeting in Omaha. Around 1700 youth and 200 adults from fourteen states participated in the two-day meeting. State President Justine Petsch (Milford) and National Officer Katie Madsen (Stuart) were involved with the opening session; how proud we were of each of them! Josp Shipp then challenged students to “Don’t Be Average.” During the conference members and advisers from 23 Nebraska chapters and one chapter from Iowa assisted with stuffing packets; staffing the registration desk, the hospitality table or headquarters room; and, serving as ushers or hosts at sessions. The State Officer and Peer Education Teams comprised the Courtesy Corps on Saturday. Twenty members from six Nebraska chapters presented Youth Training sessions. Rhett Lauback spoke about “Extraordinary Leadership!” at the closing session. What an honor for Nebraska to host a Cluster Meeting and how proud we were of the talents that so many of you and your students shared throughout the weekend!

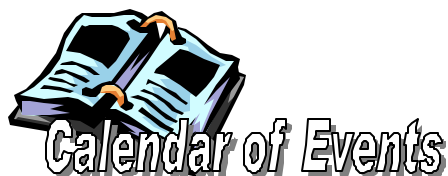
FCCLA has been in the state press in recent weeks:

- The Omaha World Herald ran a story in the Sunday, November 14 concerning the Cluster Meeting. Carolyn Brown, national FCCLA staff, was quoted as saying, “Sometimes we’re the best-kept secret.” Christi Kaup, from the Stuart chapter, spoke about some recently created public service announcements about FCCLA. The announcements will be distributed to various radio stations around the state. Listen for them!
- The Lincoln Journal-Star highlighted an interest in quilting that Rachael Tvrdy, an FCCLA state officer from Milford, shares with a grandparent.
- The York FCCLA chapter received excellent coverage from the Lincoln Journal-Star about their community service project that supports soldiers and their families.

When was the last time you contacted media in your area about your “Anything but Ordinary” students? At the seminar for state staff, Cara Pesek, a writer for the Lincoln Journal-Star and former state officer, provided tips about improving the probability of getting your story into print. One suggestion was to feature students and their projects. Most newspapers try to balance the negative stories about youth with positive ones, but they don’t always have a ready source for positive stories; become that ready source by sending frequent press releases. Try to send a picture, complete with caption, along with the story. And, if all of this is emailed to the paper it is easy for them to just drop everything into their copy. Certainly FCCLA provides an avenue for many of you, but don’t forget to include some of the unique learning experiences you have incorporated into your FCS classroom. One angle might be how students are mastering math standards in a foods class or how a class service project is impacting a community need. Link what you are studying with one of the hundreds of nationally proclaimed weeks or months by clearly demonstrating what students are learning in your class related to the issue. Take time to highlight the extraordinary accomplishments of your students. . . and your teaching. Let’s quit being the “best-kept secret!”

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(Date, event, location, contact person for additional information and telephone number or web address. See box on right for FCS staff.)

## NOVEMBER

- 29 Commissioners Recognition for Excellence in Career & Technical Education: Lincoln

## DECEMBER

- 1 FCS Teacher Workshop; Neligh ESU; Shirley Baum  
7 FCS Teacher Workshop; Fremont ESU; Shirley Baum  
8 FCS Teacher Workshop; Milford ESU; Shirley Baum  
9 FCS Teacher Workshop; Omaha ESU; Shirley Baum  
9-11 ACTE in Las Vegas, NV; [www.acteonline.org](http://www.acteonline.org)  
14 FCS Teacher Workshop; Columbus ESU; Shirley Baum  
15 FCS Teacher Workshop; Beatrice ESU; Shirley Baum

## 2005

### FEBRUARY

- 6-7 FCCLA Board of Directors and State Officer Team, Lincoln  
10 FCS Teacher Workshop; North Platte; Shirley Baum  
11 FCS Teacher Workshop; Scottsbluff; Shirley Baum

### APRIL

- 11-12 FCCLA State Leadership Conference; Shirley Baum  
15-17 NAFCS Annual Meeting; Lincoln; Phyllis Staats; [staatssh@juno.com](mailto:staatssh@juno.com)

### JUNE

- 6-9 Nebraska Career Education Conference; Kearney (formerly called INVEST Conference)  
23-25 AAFCS; Chicago; [www.aafcs.org](http://www.aafcs.org)

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## WEBPAGE:

<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/FCS/FCS.html>

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## ***FCS CONTRACT STAFF***

We are pleased to announce that the following individuals will be working as temporary parttime employees in FCS from November through April. Each of them were assistants to Judy Berg last year so that has prepared them for assuming full responsibility this year.

**Jan Brandt** is the FCCLA State Conference Coordinator. She recently retired as FCS teacher/FCCLA adviser from Syracuse. Her responsibilities will include coordination of the Cluster Meeting in Omaha, in addition to the major responsibility for SLC. She will be in charge of facility arrangements, keynote and rotational speakers, overseeing the production of the conference program and several other items related to the conference.

**Derek Feyerherm**, former state officer from West Point, will be a Conference Assistant. He will work with the state officers prior to and during State Leadership Conference. He will also coordinate equipment and media, work with the state officer and peer education team election process and coordinate the evaluation of scholarships.

Joining us from February through April are:

**Donna Gill** will be returning as a conference secretary. We appreciate her willingness to continue to work with us in this capacity; she retired from our staff several years ago.

**Jane Hornung** will serve as the STAR Assistant to Shirley Baum and also assume a few responsibilities related to the conference in general: t-shirts, tours, exhibits and displays. Jane is a former FCCLA adviser from Arnold and recently retired from the Paxton superintendency.

**"I cannot hear what you say  
because what you are doing  
speaks so loudly."**

**Ralph Waldo Emerson**

## ***PLAN FOR STAFF REPLACEMENT***

Plans are to post the position of Education Specialist II— Family & Consumer Sciences with the special assignment of FCCLA State Adviser in early January, 2005. Requirements for the position are a Masters degree, teaching experience and FCCLA experience.

It is anticipated that interviews will be held in February with hiring completed by March 1. The beginning date of employment will be a variable to allow teachers presently under contract to fulfill the obligations of that contract; however, it is hoped that the new hire will be able to be present for part of the FCCLA State Leadership Conference and begin working here at the Nebraska Department of Education no later than June 1.

If you would like more information about this position or have someone you would recommend for this position, please be in contact with Shirley Baum.

## ***NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY April 15-17, 2005***

Millions of youth participated in National Youth Service Day, the largest service event in the world in 2004. They tutored young children, registered new voters, educated their communities about good nutrition, distributed HIV/AIDS prevention materials and met many more community needs through their service. National Youth Service Day supports youth on a life-long path of service and civic engagement, and educates the public, the media and elected officials about the role of youth as community leaders. Learn more about the 2005 plans by visiting:  
[www.ysa.org/nysd](http://www.ysa.org/nysd)

## RESOURCES

The following resources were recommended by teachers during one of the fall workshop sessions.

- Go A.P.E.! Abstinence Protects Everyone**  
This award winning, nationally recognized program is available from MediaPro. It presents young people with facts and accurate information enabling them to make healthy decisions for their lives. Committed to reducing teen pregnancies, STDs and HIV/AIDs by promoting self-esteem, self-discipline, goals and abstinence. It contains eight videos and a curriculum guide including masters and student workbooks. The complete program is \$386.25 plus \$16.75 Shipping & Handling. Individual volumes are \$59.00 each. Webpage: [www.mediakids.com](http://www.mediakids.com)
- Hidden in Plain View: A Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad** by Jacqueline L. Tobin, Raymond G. Dobard  
**ISBN:** 0385497679 **Pub. Date:** 1999  
Hidden in Plain View tells the fascinating story of a friendship, a lost tradition, and an incredible discovery, explaining for the first time how enslaved men and women encoded messages within quilt patterns that helped fugitives navigate their escape along the Underground Railroad.
- [www.realityworks.com](http://www.realityworks.com) has learning programs in addition to "Baby Think it Over."

**The Juggling Act** (\$99) is a six-day interactive program designed to educate about the financial responsibilities of life, and especially how variables like age, education level, marital status, and children can affect finances. Students are randomly assigned one of eight fictional life scenarios and manage the financial life for a year.

**The Gamble** (\$199) is a seven-day curriculum that explores the effects of drug use during pregnancy on an unborn infant.

For more information visit the website.

## RESCHEDULED WORKSHOPS

Two FCS workshops are planned in place of the three that were originally scheduled for western Nebraska.

Thursday, February 10, 2005 from 9:00-3:00 CST  
ESU #16—1221 West 17th, North Platte  
No cost; register by 2-8  
Call Deb at 308-284-8481 or [dfrates@esu16.org](mailto:dfrates@esu16.org)

Friday, February 11, 2005 from 9:00-3:00  
ESU #13—4215 Avenue I, Scottsbluff  
No cost; register by 2-8  
Go on-line to: [soar.esu13.org](http://soar.esu13.org)

### AGENDA:

#### AM—Reading Strategies for the FCS Classroom

Participants will experience examples using FCS content based on *Strategies to Engage the Mind of the Learner: Building Strategic Learners* (Billmeyer) and a variety of other resources. Persons who attended a reading session at INVEST are encouraged to bring one reading strategy that was used with students during first semester.

#### PM—Resource Sharing Session

Each participant **MUST** bring either:

- Copies of a teaching strategy or resources to share with other teachers. It might be a website, one or more of your course outlines or other curriculum materials or a public relations tool. OR
- A favorite textbook or instructional resource. Bring the item or a complete citation so others can order it if they wish to do so.
- IN EITHER CASE, be prepared to indicate in which FCS Essential Learning the resource will help students experience and attain competency.

Teachers in ESU #14 are encouraged to attend one of the above locations.

**SEE YOU THERE!!!**

## ***DIRECT INSTRUCTION VS. DISCOVERY LEARNING***

In science, how is critical thinking best taught? This question may be answered by David Klahr, PhD, a psychology professor at Carnegie Mellon University, and Milena Nigam, a research associate at the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Biomedical Informatics. They have new evidence that "direct instruction" -- explicit teaching about how to design unconfounded experiments -- most effectively helps elementary school students transfer their mastery of this important aspect of the scientific method from one experiment to another. For decades, early science education has emphasized "discovery learning," in which children, given experimental materials such as springs and pulleys, marbles and ramps, are expected to "discover" scientific principles on their own. The approach is a legacy from two intellectual giants: developmental psychologist Jean Piaget and educational philosopher John Dewey. Piaget believed children learned better when they learned on their own; Dewey sought to motivate students with hands-on, real-world problems. Still, science and similarly complex subjects may well require a distinct teaching methodology, says Klahr. His controlled studies continue to demonstrate that, at least for many of the multi-step procedures used in science, direct instruction works and generalizes better. "No single study ever settles a debate once and for all," says James Stigler, PhD, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles and director of video studies for the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. He notes that the study's two teaching approaches exaggerated their real-world counterparts, limiting generalizability, but thinks the study does underscore that labs work best when integrated with explicit instruction in critical science concepts and methods.  
<http://www.apa.org/monitor/jun04/instruct.html>

*"Kind words can be short and easy to speak,  
but their echoes are truly endless."*

*-Mother Teresa*

## ***NUTRITION ACCURACY IN AMERICAN MAGAZINES***

The American Council on Science and Health conducts periodic surveys of the quality of nutritional coverage

by a number of popular magazines with respect to their accuracy, presentation and recommendations. The full report of the most current survey, done in 2000-2002, can be downloaded from the ACSH website at: <[www.acsh.org](http://www.acsh.org)>

Copies of all the special reports and information on previous surveys, back to 1982, may be obtained by contacting: ACSH, 1995 Broadway, 2nd Floor, New York City NY 10023-5860. Phone: 212-362-7044.

The popular magazines receiving the Generally Reliable rating:

Ladies Home Journal, Parents, Cooking Light, Better Homes & Gardens, Health, Consumer Report, Good Housekeeping, Runner's World, Readers' Digest, Redbook, Prevention, Woman's Day, Fitness, Glamour, Self, Shape (Note: These are listed in the order of their rating)

Receiving Inconsistent ratings were:

Cosmopolitan and Men's Health

Receiving unreliable ratings were:

Men's Fitness, Muscle & Fitness

## ***COLLEGE STUDENTS AND CREDIT CARDS***

Heidi Davidson, vice president for MasterCard International, said college-aged students are becoming more responsible with credit card use. They are increasingly likely to pay off their balances, are less likely to max out their cards and are quickly reporting stolen cards.

Amy Aerts, service manager for the Nebraska Union branch of Wells Fargo, advises students to pay off their balances or minimums to maintain good credit. The bank's student credit limits range from \$800-900. Students who build credit eventually have a larger limit.

Source: Daily Nebraskan, October 29, 2004, page 2



## **EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAINING CENTER RESOURCES**

The Early Childhood Training Center's media center has a wide variety of videotapes and other materials available for checkout. A searchable database of the collection is available at:

[www.esu3.org/ectc.lib](http://www.esu3.org/ectc.lib)

Here are a few examples:

- *But Names Can Hurt Forever*  
Interviews with experts and victims offer a detailed and chilling expose of emotional abuse. This video shows how the cycle and terror of emotional abuse can and must be ended. Bob Keeshan (Captain Kangaroo) and James Barbarino are featured. This 1987 video has the appearance of a much newer program.
- *Everybody's Kids*  
Calls parents to become involved in the lives of their children and celebrates the important role that they play in their child's development. Interview with Mary Pipher and Bruce Perry (birth-to-three researcher) are interspersed throughout the tape. This program identifies obstacles to positive parenting and explores reasonable, practical and effective strategies for dealing with those obstacles. 1997.
- *Through Trevor's Eyes*  
This video is a dramatization of domestic violence and contains graphic scenes of physical and verbal abuse, including strong language which may be disturbing to some viewers. Includes a study guide. Produced by NDHHS, the Nebraska Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalition, and Voices for Children In Nebraska. 2001.

## **EDUCATION TRENDS: GRADUATION RATES**

While a record 85% of Americans have completed high school, only 77% of Texans age 25 and older had a high school diploma or equivalent in 2003. Texas' rate is worse among Hispanics, the state's fastest-growing population. Barely half of 4.3 million Hispanic Texans age 25 and older have completed high school.

South Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana and West Virginia also showed lower percentages of high school graduates, as did states with large immigrant populations, including California, New York and Florida. New Hampshire and Minnesota were ranked highest at 92% followed by Wyoming, Nebraska and Alaska at 91%.

In 2002, the average high school dropout earned less than \$19,000 compared with more than \$27,000 for the typical graduate, according to a new US Census Bureau study. That statistic alone is reason enough for us to seek new rigorous, yet relevant, educational pathways that will help more of our young people, especially minorities, to achieve success in high school.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Estimates for 2003  
[www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/educ-attn.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/educ-attn.html)

### **BY THE NUMBERS**

It took radio 38 years to reach an audience of 50 million people. It took TV 13 years to reach an audience of 50 million people. It took the Internet only four years to reach a use base of 50 million people; it is possible that number will double in two more years.

## NEED FOR CONSUMER EDUCATION

The Consumer Federation of America conducted a survey, which found consumers lack essential knowledge about credit reporting and credit scores. The survey was conducted by Opinion Research Corporation International with a sample of more than 1,000 adult Americans. Some of the survey findings include:

- More than 60% of households with incomes under \$35,000 said their knowledge of credit reports was fair or poor.
- 78% of young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 said their knowledge of credit scores was fair or poor.
- Only 25% of Americans knew their credit score.
- Only 3% of Americans could name the three main credit bureaus.
- Only 35% of those with incomes below \$35,000 said they had obtained a copy of their credit report from the three credit bureaus in the past two years.
- 60% of Americans were not aware electric utilities providers use credit scores.
- All but 13% did not know credit card companies use credit scores.

Source: Consumer Federation of America, <http://www.consumerfed.org>

## CHECKING A CREDIT REPORT

- 70% of credit reports contained some type of error.
- 29% of credit reports contained serious errors (false delinquencies or accounts which did not belong to the consumer).
- 26% of credit reports contained accounts which had been closed but were incorrectly listed as open.
- 20% of credit reports contained missing “positive” information (major credit, loans, mortgages and accounts showing credit worthiness).

Remember: *It is the responsibility of the consumer to ensure the information on his/her credit report is accurate.*

Source: U.S. Public Interest Research Group

## CREDIT REPORTS—MAKE IT A PRIORITY !

It is recommended that people examine a copy of their credit report annually. Credit reports can be obtained at no cost for individuals who have been denied credit, employment or insurance due to credit report information in the past 60 days.

Equifax—	<a href="http://www.equifax.com">http://www.equifax.com</a>	800-525-6285
Experian—	<a href="http://www.experian.com">http://www.experian.com</a>	800-397-3742
Transunion—	<a href="http://www.transunion.com">http://www.transunion.com</a>	800-680-7289

## **MONEY SAVING HOLIDAY TIPS**



The holiday season will soon be here! If financial stress goes hand in hand with holiday shopping, here are some holiday money saving tips.

- \$ Shop the store sales throughout the year. To keep track of what you purchased, keep the gifts in a special place or make a list and check it twice!
- \$ Set spending limits. Be realistic about how much you can afford to spend on holiday gifts and stick to it in order to avoid holiday debt.
- \$ If you are planning to buy lots of small gifts, make a list of all the people. These little gifts can add up so set a limit and try not to exceed it.
- \$ Plan ahead. Comparison shop and decide where to buy gifts because prices fluctuate from store to store.
- \$ Purchase gift sacks because they can be used and re-used.
- \$ Buy holiday cards and wrapping paper after the holidays for next year. This can save up to 50%. If buying wrapping paper in December, buy larger quantities to save money.
- \$ Use one color or design of wrapping paper for each person. Do not attach the tags so it will create excitement in determining to whom the packages belong.
- \$ Instead of buying individual gifts, buy a family one larger gift to share.
- \$ Use the cards from last year as gift tags for this year. Just cut the picture down to the right size!

### ***Remember the true meaning of the holiday season . . .***

- \$ Love is not reflected by the amount of money spent on the gift.
- \$ Give plenty of hugs and share your love.
- \$ Instead of focusing on how much is received or bought, focus on spending time with family and friends. This can help to teach kids family is more important.

For more information, check out Holiday Shopping Tips at:  
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/holiday/>

## **MONEY MANTRAS FOR A RICHER LIFE**

1. *If it is on your body, it is not an asset.* Prioritize spending to meet future goals instead of purchasing material objects.
2. *Is it a need or is it a want?* Analyze if a purchase is really necessary. Just think what would happen if the money were invested instead.
3. *Sweat the small stuff.* Small purchases add up over time.
4. *Cash is better than credit.* Even if a person pays his/her credit card balance monthly they generally spend more.
5. *Keep it simple.* A person should always live below his/her means.
6. *Priorities lead to prosperity.* If a person puts his/her values first then good things will happen.
7. *Enough is enough.* Realize when earning money takes priority over spending time with friends and family.

Author: Michelle Singletary, "The Seven Money Mantras For a Richer Life"



## REPEATING GRADES. . . WHY?

Making students repeat a grade hasn't worked for 100 years, so why is it still happening? And why do government officials, school leaders, and teachers persist in recommending retention as a remedy for low student achievement -- even when researchers call it a failed intervention? Linda Darling-Hammond, executive director of Columbia University's National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching, has a one-word answer: assumptions. Many schools, she says, operate on the assumption that failing students motivates



them to try harder, gives them another chance to "get it right," and raises their self-esteem. Those claims aren't true, Darling-Hammond maintains. The widespread trust in retention is uncritical and unwarranted, she says. It ignores several decades of research showing that, for most children, retention: (1) Fails to improve low achievement in reading, math, and other subjects; (2) Fails to inspire students to buckle down and behave better; (3) Fails to develop students' social adjustment and self-concept. Darling-

Hammond concedes that grade retention might benefit some students in the short term, but in the long term, holding students back puts them at risk. More often than not, students who are retained never catch up academically. Many eventually drop out, and some end up in the juvenile justice system. The belief that students, as well as their parents, are to blame for low achievement plays into most retention decisions, writes Susan Black. But teachers and principals seldom accept their share of blame for inept instruction, lackluster lessons, low expectations, and other school factors that contribute to students' academic disengagement and behavior problems, Darling-Hammond says. <http://www.asbj.com/current/research.html>

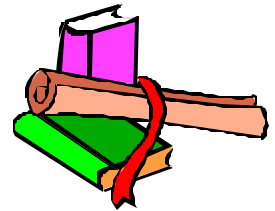
## HOW SMART IS ADVANCED PLACEMENT?

As ambitious students load up on Advanced Placement (AP) classes, critics question their quality, reports Claudia Wallis and Carolina A. Miranda. The thirst to stand out in the brutal college-admissions game is driving a kind of AP-mania all across the U.S.

Last May, 1.9 million AP exams were taken by 1.1 million U.S. high school students -- more than double the number who took them in 1994 and more than six times the number who took them 20 years ago. All this growth is generally viewed as good news by

the many fans of AP programs, who include parents, college-admissions officers and school administrators, as well as politicians on both sides of the aisle, who have called for additional funding to make AP courses more available to low-income students. But in some quarters, educators are worried that AP, which was created as a way to give bright high school seniors a taste of college, is turning into something it was never meant to be: a kind of alternative high school curriculum for ambitious students that teaches to the test instead of encouraging the best young minds to think more creatively. And as AP expands, some educators have begun to question the integrity of the programs and ask whether the classes are truly offering students an extra boost or merely giving them filigree for their college applications.

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1101041108-749409,00.html>



Source of the articles on this page and the next: PEN Weekly NewsBlast, 11/04/2004 and 10/21/2004

"Family traditions counter alienation and confusion. They help us define who we are; they provide something steady, reliable and safe in a confusing world."

--Susan Lieberman, author of  
New Traditions: Redefining Celebrations

## HEALTHY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Healthy, properly nourished students who feel safe are better able to concentrate on their work, attend school on a regular basis, and perform well in class and on tests. Despite such research findings, however, discussions about improving student achievement often occur separately from discussions about schools' roles in addressing health and safety concerns. Federal, state, and local policies are being formulated to address each concern, yet policymakers frequently fail to consider intersecting student health and achievement as they develop school improvement policies. Although academic achievement is a key mission for schools, it is not the only goal. Public schools also prepare students to be healthy, productive, moral citizens with an appreciation for a range of knowledge and dispositions, including culture and the arts. By including such knowledge and skills as well as a supportive environment, schools help students develop physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively. Those that satisfy these basic needs find it easier to help students improve their behavior, attitudes, and achievement, writes Theresa Lewallen.  
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/infobrief/issue38.html>

## THE ECONOMIC BOOST OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Investment in early childhood development pays off literally. A new Economic Policy Institute report shows how education programs for 3 and 4 year old children ultimately provide many financial benefits to local governments and taxpayers, including higher earnings and reduced crime and poverty. In "Exceptional Returns: Economic, Fiscal, and Social Benefits of Investment in Early Childhood Development," author and EPI research associate Robert Lynch finds high-quality early childhood development (ECD) programs contribute directly to higher employment and earnings, better health, less crime and poverty, solvency of Social Security, greater government revenues, and higher levels of verbal, math and intellectual achievement for participating students. The report calculates future savings and finds, for example, good early childhood education programs produce at least \$3 in benefits for every dollar of investment.

[http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/  
books\\_exceptional\\_returns#exec](http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/books_exceptional_returns#exec)



"My point is simply that it isn't enough just to learn -- one must learn how to learn, how to learn without classrooms, without teachers, without textbooks. Learn, in short, how to think and analyze and decide and discover and create."

Michael Bassis, President,  
Westminster College, Salt Lake City, UT

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."  
Eleanor Roosevelt

Those who know much about others may be smart, but those who understand themselves are even wiser!  
Lao Tse